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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9362
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 2083
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE 0172
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 0182
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 0655
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0471
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU IMMEDIATE 0179
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0338
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RUEHVN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 2478
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000423

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL MARR KG

SUBJECT: SENIOR KYRGYZ INTEREST IN ORIENTATION TRIP TO
AFGHANISTAN

REF: REF: IIR 6 955 2037 07

BISHKEK 00000423 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: DCM Lee Litenberger; Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request see para. 9 below.

12. (C) SUMMARY. Kyrgyz First Deputy Minister of Defense Oruzbaev informed DATT April 13 that the Kyrgyz government had authorized cabinet level officials to visit Afghanistan, as had been discussed during prior visits of senior U.S. military officers. Oruzbayev said he saw the main purpose of the trip would be to make clear that OEF operations are still ongoing, making continued coalition access to Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan essential. Oruzbayev suggested a delegation made up of Ministers and senior representatives from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliament, NGO's and the media.

13. (C) On 13 April 2006, First Deputy Minister of Defense General-Major Kybanychbek Oruzbaev requested a meeting with the Defense Attaché. At the meeting, he said that he wanted to talk about a visit to Afghanistan by Kyrgyz leaders, a topic that had come up in a recent meeting between TRANSCOM General Schwartz and Kyrgyz Minister of Defense Isakov, in Bishkek. Having been made aware that the U.S. command in Afghanistan had agreed to host such a visit, he stated that the Kyrgyz government had favorably reviewed and accepted the offer. The idea was for a visit to Afghanistan by Kyrgyz leaders and Parliamentarians, which the U.S. Command in Afghanistan had agreed to host (reftel). Oruzbayev said that the Kyrgyz government had favorably reviewed and supported the idea, in order for senior Kyrgyz leadership to gain a firsthand impression of the situation in Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) Oruzbaev went on to state that it was important for the Kyrgyz leadership to understand the situation there, and that seeing the situation with their own eyes would be extremely beneficial. He said that upon return, they would talk to the press and the public, to let them know that it is not true, as the Kyrgyz press often reports, that military operations in Afghanistan are complete, but instead there is much more to be done in Operation Enduring Freedom. This would give credibility to the government's support for the continued presence of Manas Airbase.

¶5. (C) Oruzbayev said that the Ministry of Defense had been designated as the Kyrgyz point of contact for the trip. Based on the initial discussions, he understood that the representatives might include senior leadership from the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliamentarians, NGOs, and local media.

¶6. (C) With respect to plans for the trip, Oruzbaev said that the Kyrgyz side would need approximately one month as a minimum to coordinate for the trip, but the important thing would be to accomplish the trip before the cold weather limitations that occur in the fall. He said MOD would wait for a written proposal that would address some of the details such as suggested timing for the trip, group size, length of the trip, and itinerary.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) The Kyrgyz are clearly interested in sending a delegation to see for themselves the conditions in Afghanistan, a visit the Embassy strongly supports. Oruzbaev's request for a meeting with the Defense Attaché, specifically to follow-up on the status of the proposal, is

BISHKEK 00000423 002.2 OF 002

confirmation that the Kyrgyz are serious about conducting a visit sometime before next fall.

¶8. (C) Recently, senior Kyrgyz ministers have reaffirmed their government's support for the continued presence of Manas Air Base, and they are looking for opportunities to demonstrate the correctness of this decision. A trip by senior Kyrgyz leaders to Afghanistan would do just this. A visit would be well publicized back in Kyrgyzstan, and direct description of the difficult conditions there, by Kyrgyz leadership, would have significant resonance with the public here. We see Kyrgyz interest in a visit as an indication that the government is, at last, now interested in building public support for the Manas Air Base. In addition to this primary objective of a trip, a visit could pay additional dividends if we could arrange to introduce senior Kyrgyz leaders to their Afghan counterparts (who could speak to them directly about the need for continued coalition operations), and also include an opportunity for the Kyrgyz to see some examples of ongoing reconstruction projects.

¶9. (C) ACTION REQUEST: That Department, working with Embassy Kabul, OSD and CENTCOM and others as appropriate, coordinate a 1-2 day VIP orientation visit for senior Kyrgyz leaders in early summer. We would envisage a two-day trip, with three objectives: 1) to show the Kyrgyz that OEF operations are still ongoing, and thus Manas Air Base continues to serve an important purpose and mission; 2) to arrange meetings between the Kyrgyz and their counterparts; and 3) to expose the Kyrgyz to the civil reconstruction aspect of OEF in order to dispel the belief that we are seeking a military only solution in Afghanistan, and to give the Kyrgyz a snapshot of the kinds of reconstruction projects that are underway (given the Kyrgyz interest in possibly bidding as subcontractors on some of these projects.) Optimal timing for the trip would be in June or early July; the Kyrgyz will be hosting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in August, and it would be helpful to make the trip beforehand, arming the Kyrgyz in advance of

possible efforts by Russia, China, or other SCO countries to pressure Kyrgyzstan to close down the base. It will be difficult for senior ministers to make a trip much later than early July, due to the pressures of preparing for the SCO summit.

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